

Flashback

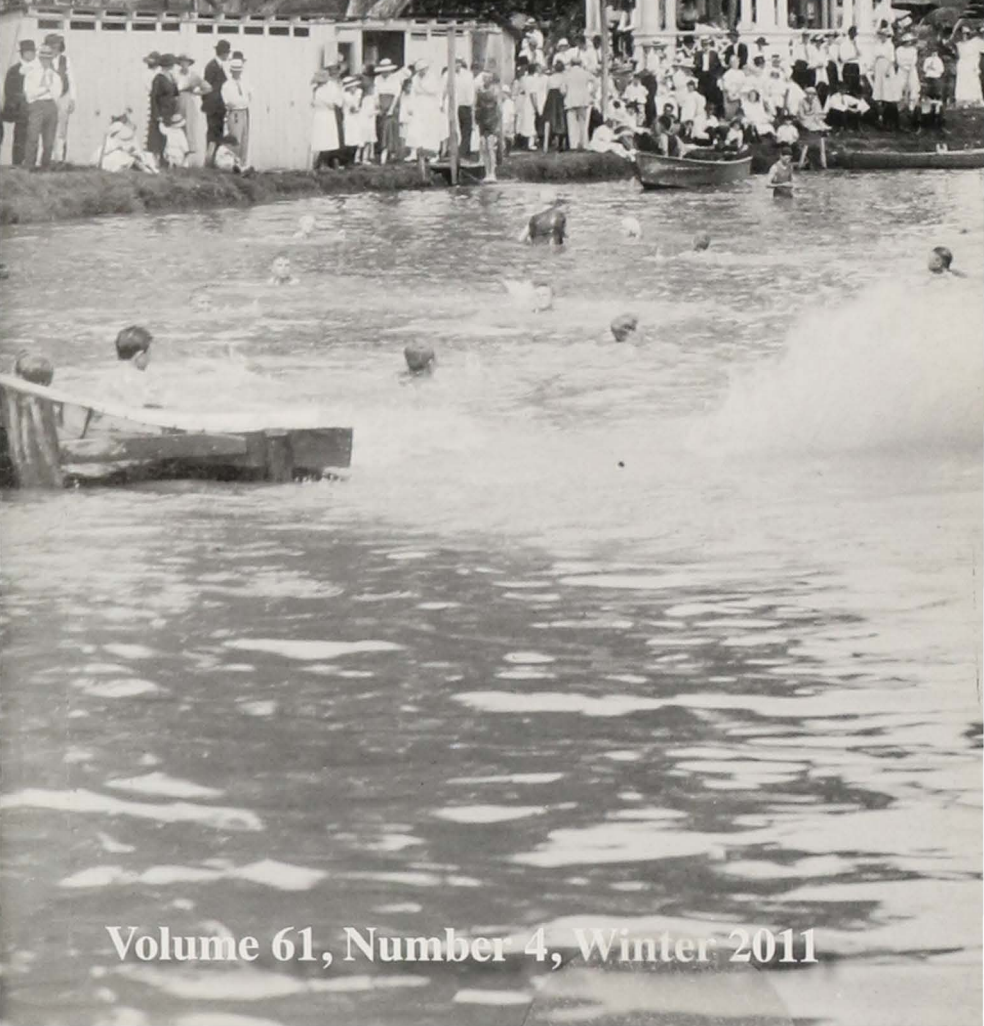
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FLASHBACK

Journal of the Washington County Historical Society
Preserving the Past for the Future

Volume 61

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On the cover: Throngs of people visited Trent's Pond in Fayetteville to enjoy swimming in the afternoon and band concerts in the evening. This scene is from the late 1910s or early 1920s

Courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection, P-490

Women Faculty at the University of Arkansas

By Ethel Simpson

There were women on the faculty of the University of Arkansas from the very first term; in fact, in 1870 twelve percent of American women had college faculty positions.¹ In the first Report of the Arkansas Industrial University, among the faculty listed are Lu J. Standard, Instructress of the Training School, and Mary R. Gorton, Preceptress in the Normal Department.² Miss Gorton came to AIU from the Cook County, Illinois, Normal and Training School. She received a starting salary of \$1,800, later increased to \$2,000. As well as preceptress, she was also instructress in mathematics and English.³ A little later in the history of the university, names of other women appeared in the reports, including Ida Pace, Jobelle Holcombe, and Daisy Young Holcomb. At a time when women in academe as well as outside it were definitely subordinate to men, these women used their professional education and status to build meaningful careers and to contribute to the history of the institution and of the wider community. However, until well into the twentieth century, many of the best-known and



Mary Gorton

most admired women faculty members at the U of A were widows, unmarried women, or dead.

Although Ida Pace remained on the faculty for only a few years, her civic and social activities earned her a wide reputation in the university and in Fayetteville. She was born near Harrison, Arkansas, in 1869. Surprisingly, considering the biographical data of her later years, she was an active outdoorswoman, enjoying riding, fishing, shooting, and canoeing along with more traditionally feminine activities like gathering berries and nuts.⁴ She received a Bachelor of Arts from the university in 1888, and after a year of graduate work there, she taught at Union College in Oxford, Mississippi, for a year, followed by a year at Valley Seminary in Waynesboro, Virginia, and another at Central College, Lexington, Missouri. In 1894-95 she attended Cornell University, where she "had a year's work."⁵ She returned to the University of Arkansas in 1895 as an associate professor of English and Modern Languages. A clipping on page 57 of her scrapbook states that "Miss Ida has given great satisfaction both as secretary to the president and teacher." At that time, fortunately for her later life, she became a member of Chi Omega. In December 1898 she married Albert Homer Purdue (1861-1917). Her academic career ended, but the skills and connections she had developed did not go to waste.

Chi Omega has particular resonance with Fayetteville and the university, since the organization was founded on the campus here in 1895. The constitution and rituals of the fraternity were written by the Five Founders, who included a local dentist, Dr. Charles Richardson.⁶ The fraternity colors were cardinal (the color that became Razorback Red) and "straw." From its inception, Chi Omega was planned as a national organization. It is now the largest women's fraternal organization in the world with over 300,000 initiates and 173 collegiate chapters. It has retained strong loyalty to the mother chapter. In 1930 Chi Omega built a "Greek theatre" on the campus commemorating its founding members.

After her marriage, Ida Pace Purdue was deeply involved in



Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas

Ida Pace Purdue, as she appeared in *History of the University of Arkansas*, published in 1910.

the fraternity. It proved to be a suitable outlet for her talents, for "during this time, Chi Omega began to acquire a reputation for determination and poise, and for doing things well."⁷ She was the first editor of the national journal, *Eleusis*, and was its national president from 1904-1910. Her scrapbook documents attendance at many national meetings.

Ida's husband was a professor of geology and Arkansas State Geologist. But after the state cut off support for his position,⁸ in February 1912 Purdue accepted the position of state geologist of Tennessee and the couple moved to Memphis. The scrapbook preserves the record of a flood of farewell parties given in her honor. She had founded the University Club and was its president. She was a charter member of the Central Presbyterian Church's Missionary Society. She was for six years the president of the Mildred Lee Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Little wonder that a few years later, she was described as "one of Nashville's most capable club women."⁹

Ida Pace Purdue survived her husband until 1958. In the last part of her life, she was intensely active in non-academic pursuits. These were concentrated in two areas, Chi Omega and the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Her education, her organizational and management skills, and her command of public speaking might have been lost to the academy, but they flourished in other settings for the rest of her very long and busy life.

Ella Howison Carnall was another local woman whose career ended almost as soon as it began. She is probably one of the best-known of the early faculty women, partly because of the poignancy of her biography. Carnall was born in 1861¹⁰ near Warrenton, Fauquier County, Virginia. Her father was a Confederate soldier killed in the Civil War and her mother died a short time later. She was brought up by an uncle, John Carnall, in Fort Smith, and entered the University of Arkansas preparatory department when she was fourteen years old. She received the B.A. degree in 1881 and served in that department as an assistant teacher and then teacher. She studied for the Ph.D. at the University of Michigan. Returning to the U of A, she was appointed as-



Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas

Ella Howison Carnall

sistant professor of English and modern languages in 1891. She became ill early in the spring semester of 1894, and the student body anxiously followed the reports of her illness. She died in Fort Smith on March 30, 1894. A bronze memorial plaque was commissioned and placed in the university library. In 1904 the university opened the first women's dormitory on the campus. Because of Carnall's excellence as a student and her later success as a teacher and role model for young women, the building was named in her memory and the plaque was placed in the entrance.

In the 1990s, Carnall again surfaced to public attention when the University of Arkansas declared its intention to raze Carnall Hall, by then a long-neglected wreck. An article in the



Construction of Carnall Hall was finished in 1906.

Northwest Arkansas Times recycled the scant facts of her biography and added the information that during a budget crisis at the university in 1891, Carnall had returned part of her salary and had successfully encouraged some of her colleagues to do the same thing.¹¹ In the event, the building was not destroyed but was restored as The Inn at Carnall Hall. Ella's Restaurant occupies the dining hall and other public rooms of the former dormitory. An exhibit tells her story and her portrait graces the lobby.

Jobelle Holcombe, born in Springdale in 1877, was another daughter of Chi Omega. Indeed she is one of the Five Founders, as they are designated in historical accounts of the fraternity. She entered the preparatory department of the university in 1892 and received the B.A. degree in 1898.¹² Like Ida Pace, Hol-



Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries

combe spent the first years of her career as an itinerant teacher, first at Willie Halsell College, Vinita, Oklahoma (1898-99), then in the Fayetteville public schools (1899-1901). Next she taught Latin and mathematics¹³ in the preparatory department at the university (1901-1903), then at Cumberland College, Clarksville, Arkansas (1903-1905). This pattern is typical of school-teachers of that era, especially but not only women teachers, who would work through several years wherever they might find a job and somehow manage to save money to return to college for more training. There was rarely any financial support for women's higher education, partly because colleges, and the general public, considered it a poor investment. Holcombe attended Cornell University in 1905-06 and was awarded the M.A. in English. At last she returned to the University of Arkansas in 1906, and after a year in the preparatory department, was appointed Instructor of English in 1907. Like Ida Pace, Holcombe had other non-teaching duties: she was the Dean of Women. Her letterhead indicates that her office was in Carnall Hall.¹⁴

Holcombe spent fifty years at the university. Her influence, like that of Ida Pace, seems to have been greater in extra-curricular activities than in scholarship. Even so, she encouraged the recognition of scholarly achievement. In 1909, she organized the university's first honor fraternity, The Torch, for women in the College of Arts and Sciences. A few years later, this organization merged with The Skull, a similar organization for men. In 1932, the Skull and Torch disbanded following the establishment of a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa on the campus. Holcombe was elected an alumna member. She also helped to establish the organization that subsequently became the National Pan-Hellenic Conference.¹⁵

Before radio and later means of entertainment entered the Ozarks, community activities included public spectacles involving music, dance, and a unifying narrative. A significant contribution to the civic life of the region was Holcombe's work as a writer of pageants. In 1922, Holcombe wrote "Fifty Years of Service" commemorating the semi-centennial of the founding of the

university, which was presented by a cast of seven hundred to an audience of seven thousand. The year 1927 called forth a script



Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries

Jobelle Holcombe, as she appeared in *History of the University of Arkansas*, published in 1910.



Holcombe Hall was built in 1948 as a women's residence hall. Today, it includes

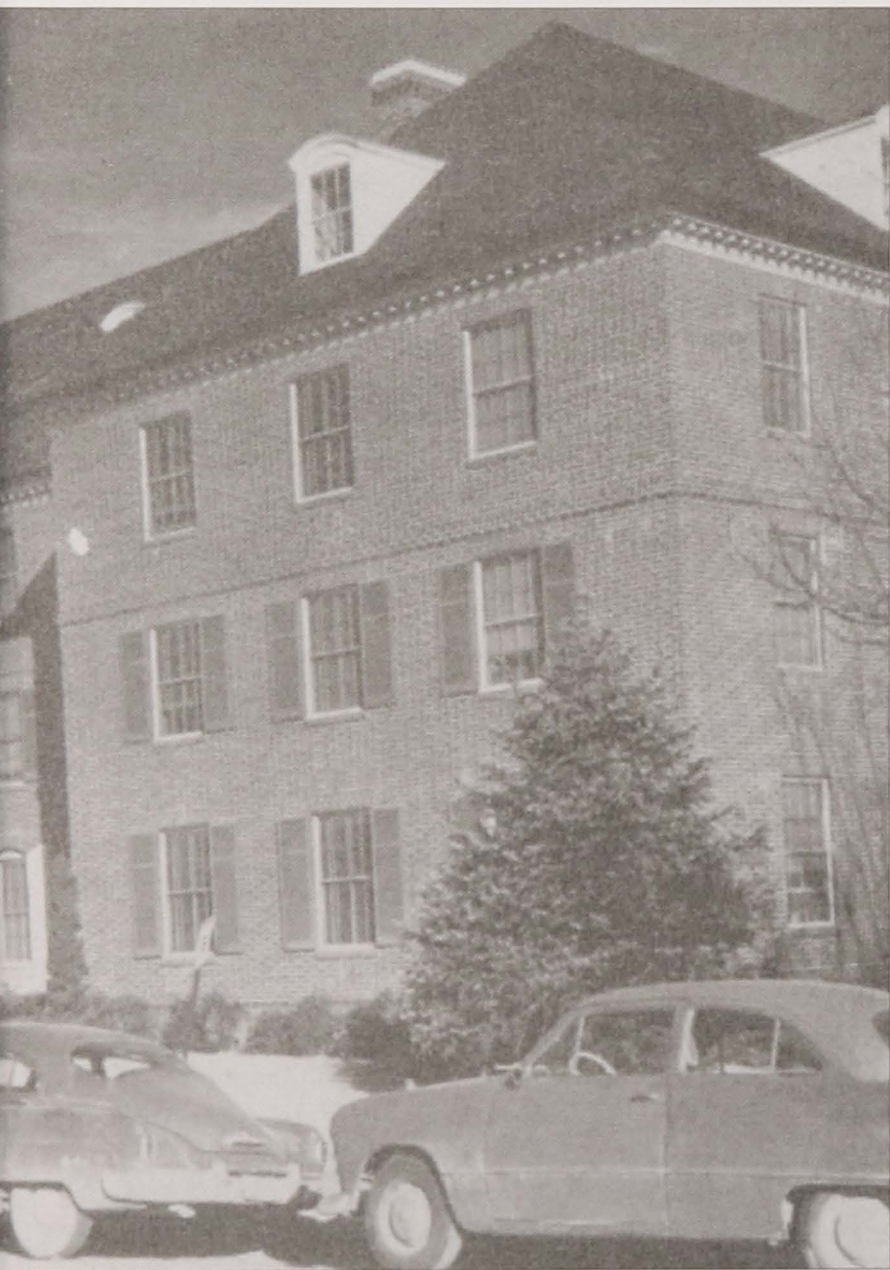


Photo courtesy of the Arkansas Razorback
a strong international community among its student residents.

for the centennial of Cane Hill, an early settlement near Fayetteville; in 1928 she wrote the script for the observance of the centennial of the settlement of Fayetteville; and in 1932, "The World is My Parish" for the centennial of the Methodist Church in Fayetteville.¹⁶

Holcombe retired from the faculty in 1945 with the rank of professor, at that time a remarkable achievement for a woman. In an interview in 1952, she told reporter Charlotte McWhorter that for several years she had nominated a colleague [Jewel Hughes Bushey] for the honorary degree LL.D., and had been told by the Trustees that "the University was not ready to bestow honorary degrees on women." Consequently, she was surprised when she herself received the degree in 1947,¹⁷ sharing the honors that year with J. William Fulbright. [Dr. Bushey, who received the honorary doctorate in 1949, taught mathematics at the university in the 1920s, and then went to Hunter College as chair of the department. In a "reconstructed conversation" in his history *The First 100 Years*, Robert Leflar has Holcombe saying that Dr. Hughes, as she was then known, left because, as a woman, she had little chance of advancement at Arkansas.¹⁸] In 1948 the University of Arkansas named a new women's dormitory in Holcombe's honor.

Although the university had established a retirement pension system for its faculty in 1923,¹⁹ it is doubtful that Holcombe could have retired entirely from paid work. When she left the faculty in 1945, she worked briefly at the Fayetteville Public Library and then at Southwestern University at Memphis. In 1951 she returned to the university's Division of General Extension. She compiled reading lists for adult education courses and for a publication by General Extension, the Parent-Education Book Shelf, which was intended to provide continuing education to parents at modest cost. Holcombe died in 1962. Her grave in Bluff Cemetery, Springdale, is marked by two white columns resembling those in the Greek theatre on the university campus, with the inscription, "A Founder of Chi Omega."²⁰

Jobelle Holcombe's sister-in-law was Daisy Young Holcomb



Photo courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History

**Daisy Young Holcomb, in either Fayetteville or Springdale, 1902-1903.
(Marion S. Warner Collection; S-68-19-1009)**

(1880-1963).²¹ Her father was Dr. John Young of Springdale, "the only graduated physician in 1883." Her brother Frank was also a physician and a president of the Arkansas Medical Society.²² Daisy Young entered the preparatory department of the university in 1894 at the age of thirteen. She received the B.S. in zoology in 1900. She was a member of Chi Omega. She enrolled at the University of Missouri and received the master's degree, and then studied for two years in the University of Missouri medical school. Young's medical studies were very unusual. In her time, only about 5 percent of medical students were women.²³ That she even considered a medical career and was admitted to a medical school was probably due in part to her father's personal and professional influence. She did not finish the doctorate, but returned to Arkansas. In the census of 1910 her occupation is listed as teacher, and she was living with her parents. In 1912 she married Bruce Holcomb.²⁴

Unlike Ida Pace Purdue, however, Daisy Young Holcomb did not transform herself permanently into a club woman and civic leader, although she was active in the Twentieth Century Club and in the Presbyterian Church. Further, she and her husband helped to establish the Fayetteville Public Library in 1916. In 1922, Professor Frank Pickel of the university Zoology Department died, and apparently Holcomb took over his classes on a part-time appointment.²⁵ After her husband died in 1924, she began teaching full time in the Zoology Department, where she remained for twenty-five years. She was elected an alumni member of Phi Beta Kappa when it was organized at the university in 1932 and was a member of Sigma Xi, the honorary science fraternity. Among her significant contributions to the department was her work with pre-med students, where her own academic preparation served her well.²⁶

These women had several things in common. They were all from prominent local families. They had excelled in their studies at the university and had precollegiate teaching experience at the university before being appointed to the faculty, so they were known to the administrators. In those days before national

searches for faculty, they were easy choices to fill the undergraduate faculty ranks. From their point of view, the university provided them a means to develop their talents within the confining social and academic expectations of the day, and to claim their status as educated and high-achieving women. These goals still motivate women at the present time, when, thanks to them and others like them, some of those conditions have changed for the better.

END NOTES

1. Table from the Digest of Education Statistics, 1980, 1982, cited by Barbara Miller Solomon, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985, p. 133.
2. *First Report of the Arkansas Industrial University with a Normal Department Therein*. Little Rock, Little Rock Printing and Publishing Co., Printers, 1873, p. [8].
3. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
4. Ida Pace Purdue Scrapbook. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville, p. 57. This comprises chiefly undated clippings, often without any evidence of their source, pasted in. The pages are numbered in ink, not entirely accurately. Like Martha of Bethany, I have done what I could.
5. Ida Pace Purdue Scrapbook. A clipping on p. 83, with a dateline of Fayetteville, June 10, 1895, states that she was awarded a competitive fellowship of \$500 that she could "take up" if she returned to Cornell. According to Solomon, p. 136, Cornell first gave a fellowship to a woman in 1884, but women were generally ineligible for most graduate fellowships.
6. Chi Omega has an extensive Web site, www.chiomega.com. Viewed October 15, 2011.
7. *Ibid.*, "Our History."
8. Walter Manger, "Albert Homer Purdue." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=326>.
9. Scrapbook, p. 71.
10. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=72780716>. Cites research of Andrea Cantrell, emeritus librarian, Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Accessed October 15, 2011.
11. "The Life and Times of Carnall Hall," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, "Living," Sunday, Sept. 22, 1996, p. C 1, 3.
12. Biographical information: Reynolds and Thomas Research Papers, MC 770, Box 1, folder 70. Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.
13. Harrison Hale, *University of Arkansas 1871-1948*, Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Alumni Association, 1948, p. 77.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Charlotte McWhorter, "Jobelle Holcombe: Campus Favorite for 50 Years," *Arkansas Gazette*, Sunday, Jan. 20, 1952, Page 6E.

16. Reynolds and Thomas Research Papers.
17. Ibid.
18. *The First 100 Years: Centennial History of the University of Arkansas*, p. 154.
19. Leflar, p. 93.
20. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=17230597>. Accessed October 15, 2011.
21. Todd Deatherage, "Daisy Young Holcomb," *Some Illustrious Educators of Old Main, Fayetteville, Ark.?* : The Commission Sub-Committee, 1991?, pp. 33-34. According to Deatherage, Jobelle Holcombe added the final "e" to her name so that it would match her given name.
22. Ruth Ellis Lesh, "A Century of Medicine in Northwest Arkansas." Address to the Arkansas Medical Society, Hot Springs, Arkansas, April 1975. Files of the Arkansas Country Doctor Museum, Lincoln, Arkansas. <http://www.drmuseum.net/lesh/document28.pdf>. Accessed October 22, 2011.
23. Solomon, p. 132.
24. I am indebted to Carolyn Reno, Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, for these census data.
25. Deatherage, p. 33. This corresponds with dates of Pickel's death and Holcomb's appointment in Hale, pp. 264, 261. See undated notes of an interview with George Holcomb, in the Vertical File for Holcomb, Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries.
26. Deatherage, p. 34. Author's note: The basic structure of this sketch is taken from a biographical essay written by Miss Elizabeth Dupree Ellis of Fayetteville, Ark. The sketch does not account for the entire decade between her attendance at the university and her marriage.



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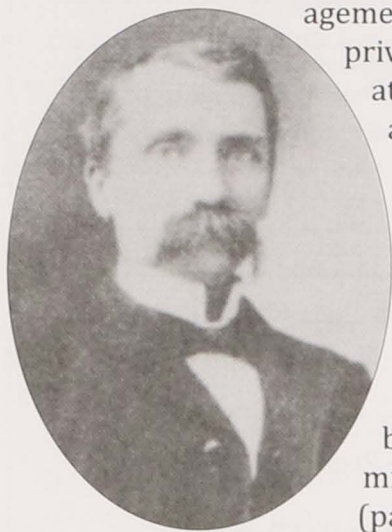
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A History of Fayetteville City (Wilson) Park

By Jerry Hogan

For over one hundred years, Fayetteville's City Park, officially named Wilson Park, has provided citizens with a pleasant recreational area where they and their families could picnic, play, and swim. Although the park is no doubt familiar to most locals, its history may not be quite as well known.

Fortunately, the history of City Park falls into three distinct phases that can be identified through its ownership and management. As early as 1906, the park was privately owned, maintained, and operated by A.L. Trent, a very benevolent and civic-minded man.



A.L. Trent

In the mid-1920s, a group of local businessmen — led by Dr. Noah Drake of Drake Field fame — purchased the park from Mr. Trent. Dr. Drake and his fellow investors formed the City Park Company and that organization ran the park — building the first permanent swimming pool and several stone cottages (part of which still stand today) — until the 1940s.

The city of Fayetteville purchased City Park from Dr. Drake — who had bought out the other investors — in late 1944 and has owned it ever since. Under municipal ownership, the park was expanded greatly and the tennis courts and ball field,¹ among other improvements, were added over the years.

What we have today, though, is owed to a very large degree to the original owner of the city park area: A.L. Trent. According to William S. Campbell, in his book *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*, Trent had been a cashier at the old Washington County Bank before becoming an insurance man.² He was also a practicing Methodist and a member of the Chamber of Commerce.³

In the early years of the twentieth century, Trent had purchased the land in and around the original City Park. Through his own goodwill he provided Fayetteville with a place for individuals and families to gather in “a place of beauty”⁴ and in good weather to swim and boat in what was then called Trent’s Pond.⁵

In 1908, an anonymous writer going by the name “City Park Poet” penned a tribute to the natural beauty of this new addition to Fayetteville. In the poem “Athens of Arkansas,” the author tells the audience that “By being more friendly with Nature and Art,” we “have added to town a beautiful park” and:

To sum it all up – to come to the test,
There’s but one addition that we can call best,
The one by Mt. Nord through Englewood shade,
The place of all places that Nature has made,
The place she has made and sealed with her mark
The beautiful place we call CITY PARK.⁶

Besides anonymous poetic renderings of the park’s fine qualities, A.L. Trent himself (there is no evidence that he was the City Park Poet, too) liked to write occasional letters to the newspaper touting his park and its facilities.

On October 21, 1916, over a month after the park had closed for the season, Trent wrote a letter printed in the *Fayetteville Daily*. He thanked members of the public for their “patronage” and said he “hoped to make the Park a still more inviting place.” To do so, however, he noted that it was “entirely beyond” his “means or ability to do so.”

Lobbying for the city to take ownership of the park (“of course the city should own the park”), Trent reminded readers that three years before he had offered the park and the springs,



Trent's Pond in the sylvan valley of Scull Creek, looking southwest toward



Courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection, P-497
Old Main in the 1920s.

two one-half acre deeds, to the city if they would agree to improve the property. With no response to his offer, he continued maintaining the park by himself. Trent stressed in the letter that the park, if maintained at a high level and advertised throughout the region, could bring in visitors from Texas and Missouri and steal some of the thunder of other "summer resort" destinations like Winslow and Eureka Springs.

The following summer, Trent wrote another letter to the paper that provides a glimpse into the life of our city nearly a century ago. Trent's purpose was to announce an increase in the price of swimming at City Park to 25 cents whether swimmers provided their own suit or not –the same price as charged in area towns he had visited like Muskogee, Okla., and Fort Smith.⁷

Trent reminded his customers that previously he had offered a 5 cent reduction in the price if they brought their own swim suit. Morning short swims ("before breakfast") would remain 10 cents, but patrons were asked to be out of the water by "7 o'clock" so that "the boy who waits on them can go to breakfast too."⁸

By the early 1920s and on into the middle of the new decade, City Park was beginning to enter what might be called a transitional phase. A.L. Trent was still its owner and manager, but other voices with other plans for the park were being heard. In April of 1923, for example, it was suggested that the city of Fayetteville buy the park. An unidentified "prominent citizen" said that because the town was "growing rapidly" it could not expect "private individuals" (meaning A.L. Trent) to maintain this "valuable ground as a public playground free of charge."⁹

A \$40,000 bond investment, it was suggested, would provide "20 acres of land" (including almost 17 acres to the west of the original park known as Wilson's Pasture for use as a tourist camp) that would give Fayetteville a park "worthy of its name" and one "where the tourist public may be made comfortable and happy."¹⁰

The same "prominent citizen" mentioned above advocated municipal intervention because this "beautiful hill-side which



Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries

The natural amphitheatre of the hillside sloping down to the valley has made Fayetteville's Wilson Park a logical place to conduct outdoor pageants, from this 1919 patriotic production just after World War I to the more recent Pops in the Park concerts by the North Arkansas Symphony of the 1980s and 1990s. (William S. Campbell Collection, MC1427)

has been compared favorably by travelers in Athens to the most beautiful natural amphitheatre in the world must be cut up into building lots unless Fayetteville does something to save it."¹¹

Early the following year, 1924, the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce met to further plans for a tourist park. They proposed that Wilson Pasture, which it was believed could be purchased for \$10,000, "be utilized for an auto park." By the end of March 1924, the Chamber had begun a Tourist Camp fund that, with a goal of raising \$1,500, would finance an auto park to "lure tourists from all sections of the country."¹² By April 2, the paper reported that the camp had had its first guests and they "Like it."¹³

Even though the auto park was already in use, by mid-April the Tourist Camp fund drive was still in progress and had taken in \$1,067 although about another \$500 was still needed to reach the earlier-announced goal.¹⁴

Near the end of the month, the paper reported that internationally renowned author, historian and philosopher Will Durant, on a visit to Fayetteville "several years" before, had said that the natural amphitheatre in City Park "rivalled that at Athens." Durant's comment may be one of the original sources for the frequent comparisons between Fayetteville and Athens so often repeated by well-meaning local boosters during this optimistic era.¹⁵

On May 1, 1924, the Chamber of Commerce suggested what they believed should be the next big improvement to City Park. "Swimming Pool Urged for City By C. of C. Boosters" a page one story in the *Fayetteville Daily Democrat* reported. "A concrete swimming pool," W.F.D. Batjer, Secretary of the COC said, could be built for an estimated \$3000 and would be 'a great drawing card for tourists and ... vacationers.'"

Despite Batjer's optimistic projections, plans for a "concrete" swimming pool in City Park did not begin to firm up until March of 1926. A.L. Trent, still owner and manager of the park, offered to build a pool and continue to maintain the park free if the city would provide free water. In a letter to the *Democrat*, Trent was responding to the "considerable agitation" the city had gone through in regard to "buying a site for park grounds, tourist camp, etc." These efforts by the city, Trent noted, had seemingly "failed."¹⁶

Later in the month, however, a solution was found. With Dr. Noah F. Drake as its head, a private company was formed by local stockholders (including Drake and Trent, among more than forty others) with the goal of purchasing City Park and building a swimming pool there.¹⁷ City Park Company was the name of the new ownership group, and by the end of March 1926 some \$14,706 in stocks had been purchased by investors.¹⁸

On April 3, 1926, it was announced in the *Democrat* that City Park had been purchased from A.L. Trent for \$8,500 (the official date of the sale would be August 6, 1926¹⁹). Work on the proposed new pool and a playground for children was to begin in ten days.

The pool was to be located south of Trent's Pond, which it was said would be preserved, although it was not.²⁰ There were also plans to build a band shell by the pool where musical shows could be performed for patrons who sat in chairs or on blankets and watched the entertainment from above on the rolling hills of the natural amphitheatre.

Once the announcement of a new swimming pool had been made, a contest was held to find a name for the park itself. On April 14, the *Democrat* reported that "City Park" was the name selected for City Park. Two ladies, Miss Vera Drake and Mrs. Fred Armstrong split the \$10 contest prize for their shared suggestion. Not quite two weeks later, April 27, the paper noted that ground had been broken on the new swimming pool.

Just over a year later, on May 1, 1927, the pool was opened to the public. The *Democrat* reported that nearly 1,000 people attended the opening of City Park with close to 200 of them availing themselves "of swimming privileges." The pool was described as being 60 feet by 160 feet in size and that it and other improvements to the park had cost almost \$40,000.

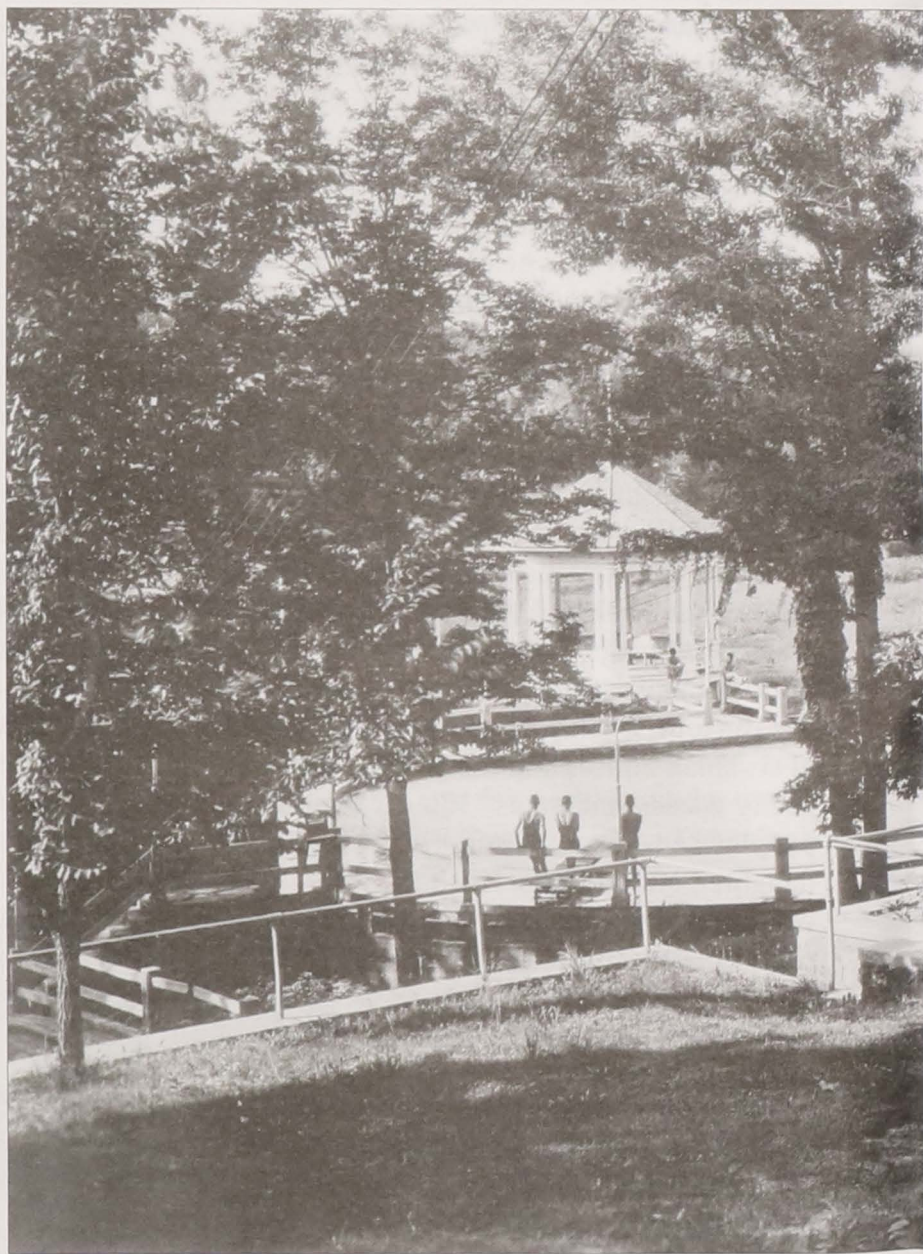
The tourist camp had also been expanded and now consisted of six small houses and three stone cottages.²¹ Tourist camp capacity was estimated as "150 cars or 450 people." A.L. Trent's son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Keith Carson, would reside in the park and be in charge of "grounds, tourist camp and concessions." Frank Barr, well known bandleader in town, was the "general park director."²²

In the summer of 1928, the tourist camp did landmark business. From June 15 until the first week of September some 4,500 tourists and 937 cars were listed in the record books of the park.²³

For the next fifteen years, City Park



Frank Barr



The City Park swimming pool, shown in the late 1920s.



Courtesy of the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Washington County Historical Society Collection, p-495

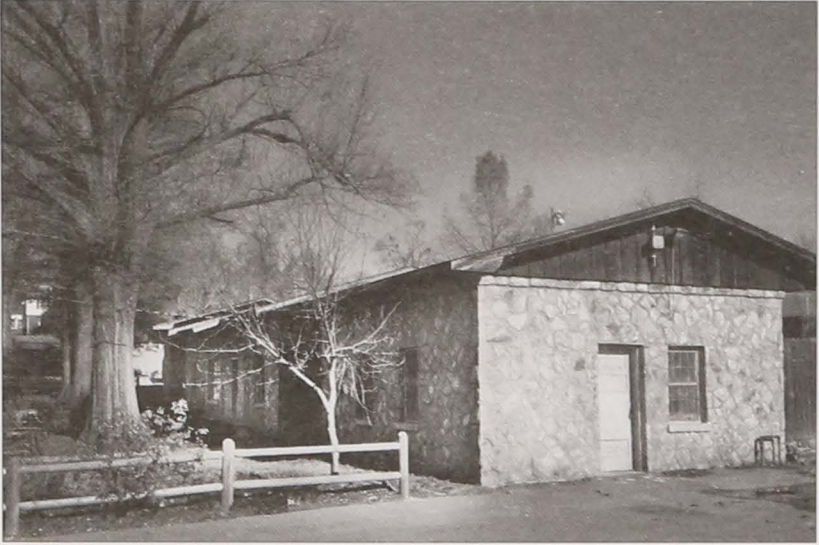


Photo by Charlie Alison

Stone cottages built for a tourist camp during the 1920s are still used today by the Fayetteville parks and recreation department for storage and for offices of the city's horticultural staff members, who work on landscaping for the city's many parks.

remained under the aegis of the privately owned City Park Company but there was a continual, low-level discussion concerning the appropriateness of municipal ownership of the park. In October 1933, Dr. Drake even offered to sell City Park to the city of Fayetteville for \$20,000 but in those cash-strapped days of the Great Depression the offer went unanswered.²⁴ Finally, during the difficult days of World War II, city ownership moved closer to reality.

In May of 1942, the City Park Company was dissolved with Dr. Drake taking sole ownership of City Park.²⁵ About two and one-half years later, in December of 1944, the city finally agreed to buy City Park from Dr. Drake for \$16,000.²⁶ City Park was now officially owned by the government of Fayetteville and it remains so today.

For years, the large tract of land west of City Park proper,

known as Wilson's Pasture after the prominent local family that owned it, at times had been rented for tourist camp parking and other recreational uses. In mid-1945, with Victory in Europe assured and hopes of a Pacific victory in the offing, an influx of college-bound veterans began arriving in town to attend the University of Arkansas on the GI Bill.

Fayetteville Mayor George T. Sanders and the city council initiated a program that allowed returning vets to park trailers throughout the grounds of City Park for an affordable fee while going to school or readjusting to civilian life. Although opposed by some, the trailer program brought in needed income to less than overflowing municipal coffers.

In the summer of 1945 Charles Morrow Wilson, third generation scion of the highly regarded Wilson clan and an internationally known and respected author, offered to sell Wilson's Pasture to the city on the condition that the park be named in memory of his mother, Mattie Morrow Wilson.²⁷ Wilson envisioned the new, expanded park as a "beautiful and valuable"²⁸ place for local residents to enjoy an undeveloped natural site in the heart of Fayetteville.

On August 5, 1946, the *Northwest Arkansas Times* reported that the city would purchase the 16 7/8-acre tract from Wilson. The price of the land to the city was \$15,500 (the actual sale price was \$22,500, minus the author's donation of \$7,000).²⁹ Twelve days later, on August 17, it was announced that the contract for the land was signed. City Park now encompassed 22 acres in all.³⁰

Despite Charles Morrow Wilson's presumed verbal agreement between himself and the city of Fayetteville to keep the newly purchased area "an ornamental city park," on August 20 Mayor Sanders announced in the *Times* that veteran's trailers could now be parked not just in the old City Park area but in the new section as well.³¹

A few months later, in the fall of 1946, Mrs. Roberta Fulbright, owner of the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, wrote in her "As I See It" column that the city should honor A.L. Trent, the man who had



Members of the Campbell family walking along the edge of Trent's Pond in



Photo courtesy of Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries
about 1924. (William S. Campbell Collection, MC1427)

founded City Park. Mrs. Fulbright proposed that a day in October be set aside as A.L. Trent day.³² Mrs. Fulbright's suggestion did not come to fruition, but her idea remains a valid one right up to the present day.

From December 1947 through the spring of 1949 a controversial proposal to build a Boy's Club in City Park caused a fair amount of rancor between proponents and opponents of the plan. On December 15, 1947, the *Times* reported: "City Park Site Accepted For New Boys Club Building."

Almost from the beginning, the proposal had its detractors but by late March 1948, plans had been made to start work on the new Boy's Club.³³ W.W. Higgins, director of the Boy's Club board, estimated that the building would cost around \$35,000 and would be built "just north of the present swimming pool,"³⁴ although the recommended location was shortly changed to the west end of the park, the area formerly known as Wilson's Pasture and recently purchased from Charles Morrow Wilson.

By the end of the year, opposition to the plan had grown to such proportions that Wilson himself, who was also upset by trailers being allowed in the area he had sold to the city, wrote a letter of protest to the *Times*. The new Boy's Club building, Wilson said, would grossly violate the "gentleman's agreement" he had made with the city to ensure that City Park (especially the western part that he had sold to them) would "be used as an ornamental public park for the benefit and good of the general public of Fayetteville."³⁵

In the *Times* of January 5, 1949, proponents of the Boy's Club plan began to retreat from their position. Protesters sensitive to Charles Morrow Wilson's point of view, suggested that the Boy's Club building be built in the northeast section of the park as had originally been planned, and not on the west side.

That same day, Mrs. Fulbright devoted her "As I See It" column to the controversy and suggested finding another place for the Boy's Club outside of City Park altogether. Wilson was so annoyed by the whole affair that the next day he offered to buy back "the land in question (the old Wilson's Pasture) in its

entirety at the amount of money received by me from the city.”³⁶

Fortunately, the election of Admiral Powell Rhea as mayor of Fayetteville in 1949 helped bring the Boy’s Club controversy to an end. Rhea, while serving on the Boy’s Club executive board, had opposed building the new club in Wilson Park and shortly after he assumed office it was also reported that the trailers in City Park would not be replaced.³⁷ A little over a year later, in July 1950, the Fayetteville city council voted to remove the trailers by June 1951.³⁸ With the trailers on the way out and the Boy’s Club plan no longer viable both controversies simply faded away.

By January 1951, some four and one-half years after his sale of Wilson’s Pasture, Charles Morrow Wilson’s desire to have City Park renamed for his mother had still not been fulfilled. Alderman Hugh Kincaid addressed the council on January 29 and requested City Park be renamed Wilson Park. The council voted to leave the name as City Park but approved a plan to erect a plaque to the people who expanded it and then “await the reaction of the public.”³⁹ Neither the plaque nor a public reaction to it seems to have been forthcoming.

For several years there had been plans to build tennis courts in City Park and in 1951, the courts – “long under construction” – were finally opened on August 18.⁴⁰ Just a few days later, the old tourist cabins (seven in all), which had slowly fallen into decline over the years, were sold to local entrepreneur H. O. Bailey for a total of \$852. Bailey bought the cabins to use in opening his own tourist camp on Highway 71 south of town.⁴¹

As for the Boy’s Club, in the fall of 1951 the *Times* reported that the club would move temporarily to the White Chapel Assembly of God Church building on South College Avenue.⁴² The church was located just south of the Rock Street intersection with Archibald Yell Boulevard (it is currently a vacant lot). By the mid-1950s, the Boy’s Club used the facilities of the National Guard Armory before a new building was erected at Harmon Field in the late 1950s.

With regard to the long-delayed renaming of City Park to Wilson Park, the next attempt to do so was registered in a *Times*



Photo by Charlie Alison

Construction of the castle at Wilson Park, officially titled *Point 7*, was started in 1979 by Frank Williams while he was a graduate student at the University of Arkansas and dedicated on July 20, 1980. The castle sits over a spring that feeds the reflecting pool and eventually Scull Creek. Repairs and the addition of other amenities around the castle occurred in 1999 under the direction of Lisa Netherland.

editorial of August 22, 1960. With the recent addition of Walker Park in south Fayetteville, the writer observed, it was now “a good time to name the park in the north section of the city, now called City Park. And the name it should have is Wilson Park.” The editorialist went on to give details of the 1946 sale of Wilson’s Pasture and concluded that the renaming “would be a gesture of recognition to Charles Morrow Wilson and the family which has so long lived in this area.”

Despite the several attempts and exhortations to rename City Park, no official change was made. The split or simultaneous usage of the two names is apparent in city maps of the era. The 1962 Fayetteville city map lists “City Park” but four years later the 1966 version uses “Wilson Park.” In keeping with the dual names, the 1966 phone book uses City Park.

In the latter 1960s, Fayetteville took an important step with regard to its growing park system. The city council proposed and adopted Ordinance No. 1526 which created the Department of Parks and Recreation. Some sixty years after A.L. Trent had privately provided the city a public park, municipal management of all parks in town was complete.⁴³

June 16, 1969, over twenty years after Charles Morrow Wilson’s sale and gift of Wilson’s Pasture to the city of Fayetteville, City Park was finally, and officially, renamed Wilson Park in honor of the writer’s mother Mattie Morrow Wilson. Mayor Garland Melton Jr. suggested at a city council meeting that City Manager Wesley Howe “be given the latitude to have the proper inscription placed on a plaque formally naming Wilson Park.”⁴⁴

On June 30, 1969, the *Times* ran a laudatory editorial on the dedication and renaming of the city’s flagship park. And while the name change was and is official, even today perhaps as many people still refer to Fayetteville’s main in-town recreation area as City Park as those who call it Wilson Park. Traditions, even when they are just names, are slow to change or die out.

END NOTES

1. The ballfield in City Park opened in 1955 as the original home of the Sherman Lol-

- lar Little League, as well as other youth baseball leagues. With the opening of Walker Park on the city's south side in 1961, Fayetteville Little Leaguers alternated play at both locations. City Park field was phased out of youth baseball and turned into a softball field in 1968.
2. Campbell, William S., *One Hundred Years of Fayetteville, 1828-1928*, Fayetteville, AR, 1928, pp. 17 and 78. Trent's obituary in the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, Thursday, May 2, 1940 refers to him as a "prominent realtor."
 3. Campbell, pp. 70 and 87.
 4. *Fayetteville Daily*, October 21, 1916.
 5. Trent's Pond, a small, spring-fed lake used for boating and swimming in City Park, was located just north of the current swimming pool, basically covering what is now the softball field. The 1908 Plat Map of Fayetteville clearly shows where the lake was located.
 6. *Fayetteville Daily*, April 8, 1908.
 7. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1917.
 8. *Ibid.*
 9. *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, April 23, 1923.
 10. *Ibid.*
 11. *Ibid.* The natural amphitheatre is located at the top of the hill on the southeast corner of the park where Park and Louise streets intersect.
 12. *Ibid.*, January 4, 1924.
 13. *Ibid.*, April 2, 1924.
 14. *Ibid.*, April 11, 1924.
 15. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1924.
 16. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1926.
 17. *Ibid.*, March 25, 1926.
 18. *Ibid.*, March 31, 1926.
 19. *Ibid.*, August 6, 1926.
 20. Trent's Pond was used again, for boating only, in 1927 but by 1928 it had been drained and the paper reported there were plans to put a sunken garden in its place (*Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, April 25, 1928). In later stories in the *Northwest Arkansas Times*, the location of the pond was described as "directly north of ... current swimming pool" (November 6, 1982) and as lying "beneath park's softball field" (June 22, 1985).
 21. One stone cottage remains today in the park. It is located north of the swimming pool, facing the tennis courts.
 22. *Fayetteville Daily Democrat*, April 25, 1927.
 23. *Ibid.*, September 7, 1928.
 24. *Ibid.*, October 23, 1933.
 25. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1942.
 26. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1944. The official date of sale was January 15, 1945.
 27. *Ibid.*, July 3, 1945.
 28. *Northwest Arkansas Times*, August 16, 1946.
 29. *Ibid.*
 30. *Ibid.*, August 17, 1946.
 31. For more detailed information about the controversial and oftentimes acrimonious sale of Wilson's Pasture, see Hogan, J. B., "You Can't Go Home Again: Charles Morrow Wilson's Unhappy Return to Fayetteville," *Flashback*, Winter 2010, Vol.

- 60, No. 4, (Washington County Historical Society; Fayetteville, Ark.) pp. 115-145.
32. Ibid., October 17, 1946.
33. Ibid., March 26, 1948.
34. Ibid., December 15, 1947.
35. Ibid., December 23, 1948.
36. Ibid., January 6, 1948.
37. Ibid., April 26, 1949.
38. Ibid., July 25, 1950.
39. City Clerk, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Minutes, Resolutions, and Ordinances of the Fayetteville City Council, January 29, 1951.
40. *Northwest Arkansas Times*, August 17, 1951.
41. Ibid., August 22, 1951.
42. Ibid., October 23, 1951.
43. City Clerk, Fayetteville, Arkansas, Minutes, Resolutions, and Ordinances of the Fayetteville City Council, January 3, 1967.
44. Ibid., June 16, 1969.



From the Arkansas Gazette, July 26, 1836, Page 1, Column 3

WOOL—WOOL—WOOL.

The subscriber has returned from the east with Carding Machinery, and has located himself on Cane Hill, in Washington county, for the purpose of CARDING WOOL into rolls. His machinery is new, and of the most modern and improved plan.

The Carding of wool will be executed at the shortest notice, and in the best manner, at ten cents per pound; mixed wool in proportion. Wool will be taken in part pay for Carding. He will commence Carding on the 1st of June, 1836. For the benefit of those who have wool to card, it is proper to state, that it must be free from burs, and well cleansed, before it is brought to the Factory.

WANTED—20,000 lbs. of WOOL, for which cash will be paid on delivery.

N.B.—The subscriber has on hand a quantity of SPUN COTTON, of assorted numbers.

S.F. ATHERTON.
Cane Hill, May, 1836. 22-tf

A Story from Evansville

EDITOR'S NOTE: Not long after the killing of James Starr and Sewel Rider on Nov. 9, and the murder of Thomas Watie on Nov. 14, the Arkansas State Gazette reported in its Dec. 1, 1845, issue the following murders on Nov. 20 near Evansville. The victim referred to as "Stoain" was also known as "Mill Boy." The Ross mentioned is Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation.

MORE MURDERS.

Joseph Swimmer and Stoain, Cherokees of the Treaty Party, were most inhumanly murdered, near Evansville, on Thursday morning last, by a party of fifteen Ross men; the first was shot five times, and the latter stabbed twice through the heart. A friend near the place writes us as follows: "The Cherokees belonging to the Treaty Party and Old Settlers are running, daily, across the line into the State, in order to save their lives; leaving behind them all their property of every description. There is no telling where this will end, should the United States Government be as dilatory and timid as usual."

The greatest excitement prevails, and we should not be surprised to hear that the citizens of Washington county, on the line, had crossed into the nation to put a stop to these foul and disgraceful murders. That they should be stopped is evident to all, as our citizens are justly alarmed lest the Indians should cross the line and commit depredations. — There is now more excitement and greater danger than ever before, and the Cherokees are now more troublesome than they have ever been. We hope that the authorities of the State will interfere and stop the proceedings, which tend so much to injure our State.—*Ib.*



Fifth Annual Lemke Prize Competition Open for Submissions

The Washington County Historical Society announces the fifth annual competition for the Walter J. Lemke Prize with a call for articles. Anyone interested in Washington County history, whether a professional or amateur historian, is encouraged to enter. Topics can be on any phase of Washington County's history or archeology, deal with an individual or institution connected with the county, and can address any time period.

The winning article will receive \$300; Second prize receives \$200. Both winners receive framed certificates. Winners will be recognized at the annual Ice Cream Social in 2012.

Manuscripts will be judged on their contribution to the expansion of the county's history; the originality of the subject; and, the use of primary and secondary sources. The manuscripts must be original material, and not have been previously published; no more than 40 pages, typed, and double-spaced. Footnotes should be included on separate, double-spaced pages, although they do not count toward the 40-page limit. The title page should contain the heading "WALTER J. LEMKE ENTRY," the full title of the manuscript, the author's name, mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

Entries become the property of the Washington County Historical Society and will not be returned to the author. All papers will be considered for publication in the *Flashback*. The historical society reserves the right to award one or no prizes.

Copies of all entries in the Lemke Prize will be deposited with the Special Collections Department at the University of Arkansas Libraries. Entries may be mailed to Lemke Prize, Washington County Historical Society, 118 E. Dickson Street, Fayetteville, AR 72701, or e-mailed to charlie.alison@gmail.com by June 30, 2012. If the entries are e-mailed, they should be either in the PDF or Microsoft Word format.

For additional information on the Walter J. Lemke Prize, please contact Charlie Alison at the above mailing address, at 575-6731 or at charlie.alison@gmail.com.

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